

Rereading Joseph Addison's *Cato*: The Meaning and Function of Syphax as the Other*

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1

When I first started reading Joseph Addison's *Cato* without any previous background knowledge and scholarship on *Cato*, I was interested and impressed more by the two Oriental *dramatis personae*—especially Syphax—than by Cato and his Roman followers. After that I reviewed several critical essays on *Cato* from Addison's age to our time, and, to my disappointment, I found that most Addisonians had the different or almost opposite view of *Cato*. Syphax, not Juba, as the Other, seems to have been ignored and undervalued without exception in any critical discourse. Syphax has always been described as "evil," "villainous," "traitorous," "perfidious," or "native [Numidian]" in a derogatory sense.

John Dennis in his famous critique, "Remarks Upon *Cato*" (1713), accepted the conventional critical discourse as far as Syphax is concerned. He argued that Cato is an unsuitable tragic hero because his whole bent is toward subduing his feelings, and that the other characters are not proper to tragedy. He says that "[E]very where throughout it, [Addison] makes Virtue suffer, and Vice triumph; for...the Treachery and Perfidiousness of Syphax prevails over the honest Simplicity and the Credulity of Juba" (*Critical Heritage* 292). He continued by saying that "Sempronius and Syphax are too scandalous for any Tragedy" (296). Dennis concludes this point unfairly and incorrectly: "The Scene between Juba and Syphax has in it the very counterpart of every thing which recommends the other [in comparison with the scene between Anthony and Ventidius in the Dryden's *All For Love*]. The Audience before it begins knows Syphax to be Traytor to Juba, and a Villain. Syphax begins it like a Clown and a Brute, with Raillery too low and too gross for Comedy. The Advice that he gives to Juba tends to his Infamy, if it does not tend to his Ruin. Because Juba will not take that Advice, Syphax, like a true Villain, enrag'd at the Virtue and Integrity of his Master, affronts him in the grossest manner" (311). For me, Syphax does not seem to be simply treacherous, villainous, and gross.

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The Tory "Examiner" of 27 April-1 May 1731 also responded to the popular success of *Cato*. While applauding the tragedy and Addison as one who stood above faction, the author of the essay simply disregarded Syphax as "a treacherous Foreigner" (*Critical Heritage* 271) who conspired the Ruin of Cato and of Rome with Sempronius. Without any exceptions Syphax has not so far received due critical attention and treatment: it seems to be too long overdue. While he has not been neglected and forgotten as an insignificant, villainous, and perfidious foreigner, or as the Other, Juba has been hailed as a model of Roman virtues simply because he imitated Cato and fawningly followed Roman way, forgetting his status as a Prince of Numidia.

Even Dr. Johnson appears to disregard the rest of the characters as unimportant, let alone Syphax: "To the rest, neither gods nor men can have much attention; for there is not one amongst them strongly attracts either affection or esteem" (*Lives* II, 132-33). Virginia Woolf gives a decision upon *Cato* in her essay "Addison" (1919) in the following words: "To be thinking that dead people deserved these censures and admired this morality, judged the eloquence, which we find so frigid, sublime, the philosophy to us so superficial, profound, to take a collector's joy in such signs of antiquity, is to treat literature as if it were a broken jar of undeniable age but doubtful beauty, to be stood in a cabinet behind glass doors. The charm which still makes *Cato* very readable is much of this nature.... Occasionally in *Cato* one may pick up a few lines that are not obsolete; but for the most part the tragedy which Dr. Johnson thought 'unquestionably the noblest production of Addison's genius' has become collector's literature" (98-9).

While evaluating it as a "landmark in the tracing of eighteenth century tragic development," Nicoll also criticizes *Cato* harshly: "The dialogue to readers of the twentieth century seems dull and passionless. The love element in the adoration of Marcia by Juba and of Lucia by Portius and Marcus is artificial. Sempronius and Syphax are but *conventional villains*" (88~9: my emphasis). Most Western critics and scholars seem to have repeated again and again the conventional interpretation of *Cato*, for they have rarely tried to go beyond their secure and privileged territory of conventional discourse, i.e., a kind of colonial discourse. But as I have already suggested, from the start something quite different was brewing in my mind, so I was strongly tempted to reread *Cato*.

Roland Barthes says that "Rereading, [is] an operation contrary to the commercial and ideological habits of our society, which would have us 'throw away' the story once it has been consumed ('devoured')...[rereading] alone saves the text from repetition (those who fail to reread are obliged to read the same story everywhere), multiplies it in its variety and its plurality:...[rereading] recaptures a mythic time...it contests the claim which would have us believe that the first reading is a primary, naive, phenomenal reading which we will only, afterwards, have to 'explicate,' to intellectualize...If then ...we *immediately* reread the text, it is in order to obtain...not the *real* text, but a plural text: the same and new" (*S/Z* 15~16).

Edward W. Said's account of Oriental Studies as a discourse seems to contribute a lot to abolishing ethnocentrism—that strategy of a “flexible *positional* superiority: which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand” (7). The relationship between the Occident and the Orient has always been a relationship of power, of domination and of varying degrees of a complex hegemony. It occurred to me that in our dealings with language and thought, we need to avoid (if we can) those presuppositions of orientalism which help us understand in Said's words, the “enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the Post-Enlightenment period” (3). I found Said's reading strategy of Western texts particularly useful here, for Syphax and Juba are Orientals in Near East. As a foreign reader equipped with these guiding reading strategies, in this paper, I would like to discuss Addison's representation of the Other (i.e., Syphax) and open the possibility of pluralizing *Cato* as a “writerly” or productive text instead of a “readerly” or consumptive text.

2

I began to wonder about the differences of opinions and impressions between Western readers and me. I tentatively concluded that probably because I am an outsider from the so-called Third World with different history and culture, my beginning might have been quite different from that of the Western reader as the insider. If the text possesses “Western” values, those values tend to have not universal, but culturally particular meaning. In that case the Third-World reader seems to have to play the role of an insider as well as the outsider of the text. He has to understand the ways in which the “original” meaning of the text is produced and offered as the official object of interpretation, and the ways in which the textual strategy implicates the subject of representation as a hero in the adventure of “correct” reading. But as an outsider, he has to exist outside of the text in order to oversee it and to approach the way in which the text exists concretely and materially in the world.

The radical otherness of Syphax is internalized in *Cato*. He is recognized as such when he is deprived of his own proper identity. This kind of representation of the Other can be a practice which is based upon the concept of power. Michel Foucault says determinedly in *The Order of Things*: “Knowledge of man... is always linked, even in its vaguest form, to ethics or politics” (qtd. in Mayer ix-x). Syphax is portrayed in a certain way which attempts to present him as a tool of a self-consolidating activity with a certain degree of power. On the other hand, Addison does not try to make *Cato* a completely colonial and imperialistic text by exclusivist representation of the Other. Though Dennis complained of Syphax's prevailing over Juba, Addison permits Syphax and Juba

to speak for themselves. Edward Said says in his *Orientalism* that the representation by exclusion takes place by not allowing the represented to come forward to speak for himself, since "any Egyptian who would speak out is more likely to be the 'agitator [who] wishes to raise difficulties' than the good native who overlooks the 'difficulties' of foreign domination" (33). As a representative speaker Juba speaks for the civilized world, the West, and the relatively small corps of colonial officials in Numidia. Yet Juba knows how the Numidians feel since he as Prince of Numidia embodies their history, and their expectations: "that they are a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves" (35). But he may think that he has to bring them out of the wretchedness of their decline and turn them into the residents of a colony (cf. I. iv. 30-8).

Addison allows Juba's spiritual arch-enemy to express his views in front of us: the colonized's voice is not totally crushed possibly due to Addison's humanism and cosmopolitanism. Elsewhere Addison speaks against the cruel exploitation of Negro slaves and Indians in American Colonies:

What colour of excuse can there be for the contempt with which we treat this part of our species; that we should not put them upon as the common foot of humanity, that we should only set an insignificant fine upon the man who murders them; nay, that we should; as much as in us lies, cut them off from the prospects of happiness in another world as well as in this, and deny them that which we look upon as the proper means for attaining it? (*Spectator* 215).

Addison seems to recognize that all people, whether primitive or sophisticated, enslaved or free, possess reason and are innately equal.

However, Addison's sympathies seem to be often divided, altering with his roles. As a propagandist and statesman, he should have values that are sometimes at odds with his personal conviction, because he has to consider the demands of the national purse or his country's posture in war and peace, and be aware of England as an emerging commercial empire with territorial aspirations. While he is convinced that the conquest of primitive peoples is in the best interests of England, however, he asks that the conquest be carried out humanely, with some regard for those who differ from Englishmen only in the shape of their noses or the color of their skins. He appears to have been ambivalent about his self-imposed burden and never to have resolved his inner debate about his official position against personal humanitarian belief.

We cannot say that Addison intends to propagate the revolutionary view that imperialistic power and Western domination should be attacked and dismantled. He is never a revolutionary. It would be rather accurate to say that he is a middle man or an opportunist who makes the best of the transitional nature of his age in which both conservative and radical forces were fighting for a better division of power between Tory and Whig, or that he is a cosmopolitan humanist and citizen of British Empire. While

he employs a textual strategy which allows the Other to speak for itself, he does not work for it. He seems to cater to the public taste which is diverse, and because he is responding positively to the diverse and transitory nature of his stage, he can let the Other voice be heard and establishes his dramatic career as a bourgeois playwright.

Lee A. Elioseff in his review essay on Edward and Lilian Bloom's *Joseph Addison's Sociable Animal—In the Market Place, On the Hustings, In the Pulpit* (1971) points out Addison's moral ambivalence and conflict on the domestic and international issues: "Addison stands at the conjuncture marking the ideological crisis arising when men attempted to reconcile protestant ethics... with a new political and economic reality... Addison... however, needed to accommodate their traditional world view to a new and morally uncomfortable situation... 'Opportunists,'... accommodate easily. What makes Addison interesting in this context is his attempt to wed an old moral-political world-view to the ideological demands of his situation... The abstract humanitarianism and cosmopolitanism of the educated and affluent middle class conceal a mind divided against itself.... The conflict between loyalty... and devotion to the principles of reason and free conscience is no more fully resolved than that between the principles of ascribed and achieved status" (376-9). Addison, who has both bourgeois and aristocratic connections, mediates social and cultural conflicts that cannot be easily resolved. As Elioseff says, his liberal humanism of moderate love of truth and goodness is a symptom of his successful ideological vision. Addison's imagination can contain two opposing forces on the same level of representation without giving precedence to either. As a result, we have a much more complex situation: the Other is seen as both challenging (Syphax) and contained by the authority of the subject (Juba).

In "Cato Examin'd," first published anonymously, Charles Gildon discusses "the other Dramatick Persons, that fill up this Play." He says, "The Two Characters of Sempronius and Syphax, are distinguish'd in themselves, tho' Carrying on the same Treacherous Cause, nor are they furnish'd with Manners, that are not necessary to the Business they are engag'd in. They are not made more wicked, than they shou'd be, merely to introduce a Villain;...Syphax, no Subject of Rome, nor indu'd with those Principles, that were worn out then in the Romans themselves; a Numidian, an African, that was not willing to perish in a Cause, in the Success of which he cou'd expect to be no gainer. In short, he is what we may call Wicked, but not guilty of such Breaches of common Honesty or confirm'd Villany" (*Critical Heritage* 280). Gildon seems not to have missed the point: he understands the function and meaning of Syphax in this play.

3

As I have already suggested, it was almost normative for the Western textual strategy to present the Other as a villain or inferior being at best. As Hans Mayer pointed out in his *Outsiders*, most great Western philosophers—i.e., Plato, Rousseau, Hegel, even

Marx, etc.—have tended to ignore the alienated subjectivity of the Other in their colonies and remote areas (xvi). Syphax is a vice-figure who may be one of the most heinous persons as a character in the play. However, he appears to assume perhaps his most important function ideologically.

Cato is basically a kind of play of ideas rather than the play of action. The dramatic model for this play is Senecan tragedy, which emphasizes in dialogue the discussion of ideas and downplays theatricality. Addison's attention focuses on the personal drama that accompanies political upheaval: necessity for fortitude, confidence in providence, personal abnegation. *Cato* invites its audience to observe a portrait of human greatness instead of a sequence of human actions. Addison imbues *Cato* with an ideal that impresses an audience but not with humanity that captures the imagination. Thus Samuel Johnson explains that *Cato* has the mark of poetry but not the mark of drama—the imaginative engagement of human passion. In comparing Addison with Shakespeare Johnson writes in the *Preface to Shakespeare*:

Addison speaks the language of poets, and Shakespeare, of men. We find in *Cato* innumerable beauties which enamour us of its authour, but we see nothing that acquaints us with human sentiments or human actions; ...*Cato* affords a splendid exhibition of artificial and fictitious manners, and delivers just and noble sentiments, in diction easy, elevated and harmonious, but its hopes and fears communicate no vibration to the heart; the composition refers us only to the writer; we pronounce the name of *Cato* but we think on Addison. (Sherbo 84)

Cato is a kind of drama of ideas, so the analysis of dialogue and declamation is primarily important to understand the design and theme of the play. There are several famous dialogues in the play but I concentrate on the dialogues between Juba and Syphax and Sempronius and Syphax in order to uncover Addison's view and representation of Juba and Syphax as the Other.

Syphax's expression of his ideology about his self-identity and natural identity as the Other seems to be crucial factor in *Cato*. He not only resists representation but even conducts his own representation. In other words he is *provocateur* of his own destiny and hence no mere object of representation. Syphax (as vice-character) functions for us as an indicator of the ideological working of the serious characters. Syphax is a disruptive force which *Cato* (and Juba)—as the master of a nation that originally belonged to Syphax and Juba—wants to keep at bay but which continues to confound the "order" of the colony maintained by the master's magic power. Insofar as Syphax functions as the dramatic character who can forcibly, though not effectively, challenge the authority of the hero of the play, any interpretation that does not consider the master-slave relationship between him and *Cato* will not be sufficient in explaining the meaning of the play. Syphax's "otherness" is a discursive effect since it is a product of *Cato*'s power that authorizes the marginalization and alienation of Syphax "the Numidian."

Syphax as a rebel and Oriental provides a point of view critical of the value and ideas and attitudes held by the authoritative main characters. He is a critic: he reads the hidden strategies as well as the illusion of the foreign intruder. By arguing that it is power which gives Cato his identity and personality, he resists Cato's tendency to apotheosize his origin and points to the historical origins and condition of his identity. Ironically Syphax's otherness causes the character to explain his action and the action of the play to be explicable.

Syphax starts trying to persuade his master Juba, the young Numidian Prince, out of Cato's Romanism, because Juba "breaks the fierceness of his native temper/To copy out [Roman] father's bright example" (I. i. 79-82). Syphax, who has "not yet so much the Roman" (I. iv. 10) in him, gets really furious at Juba's absent-mindedness: "Gods! where's the worth that sets this people up/Above your own Numidia's tawny sons!" (I. iv. 18-9). Syphax still holds a Numidian spirit: "Who like our active African instructs/ The fiery steed, and trains him to his hand?/Or guides in troops th' embattled elephant,/ Loaden with war? these, these are arts, my prince,/In which your Zama does not stoop to Rome" (I. iv. 23-7).

Juba internalizes the process by which the Other is incorporated into the values of the representation system. Juba's Roman worship is well represented in the following dialogue:

Why dost thou cast out such ungen'rous terms
Against the lords and sov'reigns of the world?
Dost thou not see mankind fall down before 'em,
And own the force of their superior virtue?
Is there a nation in the wilds of Afric,
Amidst our barren rocks and burning sands,
That does not tremble at the Roman name?

(I. iv. 11-7)

This is not simply Juba's respect for the powerful colonizer but also Addison's attitude to the Roman (Western) Empire as imperialist and colonial power against the Other (non-Westerns).

We hear Syphax's grief over Juba's loss of national identity:

Alas, he's lost,
He's lost'...all his thoughts are full
Of Cato's virtues: ...
If yet I can subdue those stubborn principles
Of faith, of honor, and I know not what,
That have corrupted his Numidian temper,
And struck th' infection into all his soul.

(I. iii. 20-7)

Juba lost his national identity as native Numidian. He seemed to be blinded because of the love for his foreign master's daughter: "What though Numidia add her conquered towns/And provinces to swell the victor's triumph!/Juba will never at his fate repine;/ Let Caesar have the world, if Marcia's mine" (IV. iii. 94-7). It is almost absurd that Juba has lost his dignity, honor, and responsibility as a Prince of Numidia. He has sold his soul and body to the colonizer master: "I'd rather gain/Thy praise, O Cato, than Numidia's empire" (IV. iv. 53-4). The representation of the Other in Juba whose uprootedness shows the unavoidable result of colonial repression and brainwashing would really inflict wounds upon the self-respect of the Third World reader.

Syphax represents the opinion of the colonized when he says,

What are these wondrous civilizing arts,
This Roman polish, and this smooth behavior,
That render man thus tractable and tame?
Are they not only to disguise our passions,
To set our looks at variance with our thoughts,
To check the starts and sallies of the soul,
And break off all its commerce with the tongue;
In short, *to change us into other creatures*
Than what our nature and the gods designed us?

(I. iv. 40-8) (my emphasis)

Syphax is surprised and disappointed by the fact that his prince has been changed from a really promising Numidian prince to the fawning slave of Romanism. Juba can only be a marginal man in this Roman-ruled world. While Cato says to Juba, "Thou hast a Roman soul" (IV. iv. 43), he betrays his hypocrisy on his deathbed: "A senator of Rome, while Rome survived,/Would not have matched his daughter with a king,/But Caesar's arms have thrown down all distinction" (V. iv. 88-90).

Juba has the typical characteristics of the colonized: the situation of colonization produces so passive a human being out of the colonized, that the latter cannot develop his own story. He is not free to choose between being colonized and not being colonized—because Cato as the colonizer will make the choice for him. Deprived of self-determination, he has to live the life imposed on him by colonizer. If the colonial situation lasts long, it can eventually cause the colonized even to deny his own identity. The repressed natives practically confirm the role assigned to them by accepting the very distinction between the colonizer and the colonized.

However, the fact of the denial of his own identity has little to do with the "nature" of the colonized; for the latter's "dependency complex," or "colonial complex," is not so much his original character as the result of colonization. The spurious argument that asserts the "natural" deficiency of the colonized is a mere metaphysical construction

on the colonizer's part. After shutting the colonized out of history and having forbidden him all development, the colonizer asserts his fundamental and complete immobility. However, Syphax as an old wise man knows that it is because he has been deprived of the opportunity to develop his own history that he has become a "useless" person. And it is because of this awareness that he wants to restore his lost identity. At this point, Syphax will no longer endure the colonial situation passively, but he will become a fighter or rebel for his and his country's (spiritual at least) independence. To use Matthew Arnold's phrases, Syphax's duty is "to refuse, or, if resistance is vain, at least to cry with Obermann: *Périssons en résistant* [Let us die resisting]" (229).

We can differentiate two kinds of the Other—the object of inclusion and the object of exclusion. The difference between Juba and Syphax is obvious: Syphax is a figure of exclusion, whereas Romanized Juba is one of inclusion. We see unRomanized Syphax made to appear with a meaning already determined. The adjective "Numidian" is used to imply his inferiority. The predetermination of the Numidian's meaning and its convenient exteriority (as to Romanism) guide the way the Numidian as the Orient appears in the *Cato*. In the course of describing a villain-figure, the Numidian will be simply mentioned so that the villain may appear as such.

Syphax as the Other is made to appear as the villain-enemy who should not be tolerated unless he is assimilated to the value system of the representational subject. I take Syphax as typical Other-figure, for he fulfills the definition of the Other: the Other which the Roman subject of the play conceives of as monstrous—irrational, passionate, primitive, rude, etc. Syphax is the person who can reveal the hypocrisy of Roman imperialism and colonialism.

The boasted ancestors of these great men,
Whose virtues you admire, were all such ruffians.
This dread of nations, this almighty Rome,
That comprehends in her wide empire's bounds
All under heaven, was founded on a rape.
Your Scipios, Caesars, Pompeys, and your Catos,
(These gods on earth) are all the spurious brood
Of violated maids, of ravished Sabines.

(II. v. 42-9)

Throughout the play the Roman's colonial project has explicitly been regarded as beneficial to the native Numidia (III. v. 25-33). However, the Roman's imperialist exploitation—cultural and material—seems almost non-existent and hidden.

When he commends the mission of a Roman soul, Juba is expressing the essential

view of Addison and Cato as presumptuous colonizer:

A Roman soul is bent on higher views:
 To civilize the rude, unpolish'd world,
 And lay it under the restraint of laws;
 To make man mild and sociable to man;
 To cultivate the wild, licentious savage
 With wisdom, disciple, and lib'ral arts—
 Th' embellishments of life; virtues like these
 Make human nature shine, reform the soul,
 And break our fierce barbarians into men.

(I. iv. 30-8)

Here we readily recognize the basic ideology and strategy of idealization and rationalization of colonialism and expansionism. This passage presents us with the false image of colonizer as a cultivator and bringer of light and reason and law. It is full of the cultural and moral superiority complex of the Roman soul and civilization. We also strongly experience the deceptive misrepresentation of the Other as savage, barbarian, monstrous— to be conquered and tamed.

The colonized's attitude as represented by Juba and Syphax can be applied to a reading of the text that deals with colonial experience. I think that there are two opposing ways of reading the colonial text: receptive and resistant. The former reading encourages the reader to accept the message of the text and to propagate the idea that the colonized is a natural inferior, while the latter does not let the reader accept the colonial text at face value. Resistant reading will question the way the colonized is represented in the text and point out that the meaning of the representation has to do with the established order of colonization. In this regard, it is not only analytical but also needful: it aims at correcting the situation under which it is generated, because the Other in the colonial text is not merely a force that is excluded from the culture, but something that constitutes it.

The long dialogues between Juba and Syphax in Act I scene iv and Act II scene v are revealing: these scenes deal with the central moral issues of the whole play. They discuss the different cultural and moral value system between Numidia and Rome. Syphax strives to subvert his master from his loyalty to Cato and feeds him with questions concerning the "superior virtues" of the Romans to all other nations. Why always fruitless oppositions of good and evil, black and white, God and Satan, reason and passion, East and West, etc? This is not the matter of superiority and inferiority but merely a matter of cultural difference beyond good and evil. Syphax points out the strict stoicism, Roman virtue and Cato's cause as "rank pride, and haughtiness of soul" (I. iv. 83). He also counsels his young prince to choose the glowing Numidian dames with faces "flushed

with more exalted charms, /The sun,.../ Works up more fire and color in their cheeks, than in "[t]he pale, unripened beauties of the north" (I. vi. 138-40, 142).

Liberty is one of the key ideas of the play. Cato is willing to choose death rather than bondage:

No, let us draw [Rome's] term of freedom out
In its full length, and spin it to the last,
So shall we gain still one day's liberty;
And let me perish, but in Cato's judgment,
A day, an hour, of virtuous liberty
Is worth a whole eternity in bondage,

(II. i. 95-100)

He also says that "It is now a time to talk of aught/But chains or conquest, liberty or death" (II. iv. 79-80). Cato's fight for the so-called "liberty" appears to the Other ambivalent and ambiguous, for his resistance against Caesar looks like an internal power struggle between colonizers in the imperialist empire. Addison lets Lucius, a member of the senate, indicate the damage of the war for expansion of their power: "Already have our quarrels filled the world/ With widows and with orphans: Scythia mourns/Our *quilty* wars, and earth's remotest regions/ Lie half unpeopled by the *feuds of Rome*" (II. i. 56-59) (my emphases).

Cato's "noble" philosophy and virtue seem to be legitimate and good only in Roman's own right but simply "decorative ethics" especially to the Numidians. Thus the following praise of Cato by George Sewall in "A Vindication of the English Stage" appears to be self-deceptive: "Cato is drawn, as he really was, a Lover of Liberty and of his Country, inflexibly good, and brave, adorned with Virtues that set him above his Misfortunes, strike an awe into his Foes, and give an Example to his Friends and Followers. He is an avowed Enemy...to Caesar as a Tyrant, a Usurper, the Enemy of his country, the Foe to Liberty and the Cause of Justice" (*Critical Heritage* 330). Cato's great Roman spirit may be valid and good in his own society and world. But if looked at from the opposite point of view, it could be understood as the most heinous ideology of cultural dominance. If Cato were a really humanist freedom fighter imbued with the real noble spirit, he should immediately pull out of Numidia for the native people's independence, liberty, national identity and prosperity. Cato's principle of liberty and equality appears to encourage inordinately combatting all forms of outsiderdom (the Otherness) in favor of (hypocritical) system of Roman colonialism.

4

As a resistant reader, I approached the play from a different angle. It seems to me that one's vision would be helplessly confined to one's own self unless he understood

the position taken by the Other. I am not saying that the traditional Addisonian scholarship on *Cato* is useless, but I think this kind of reading might provide another (alternative) interpretive approach more complex and richer than receptive reading and open up the possibility of dealing with the neglected or hidden meaning of the play and the unexplored function of minor characters. By stimulating the otherness in *Cato* and foregrounding the meaning and function of Syphax who was given the opportunity to speak out his ideas, we can expect some interpretive advantage for *Cato*. By doing so, we may be able to open interpretive possibilities of *Cato* as a multiple, dynamic, and plural text, which otherwise remain as a closed, static text with fixed meaning. We can also recognize Addison's ambivalent and ambiguous attitude toward the Other and evaluate his merits and demerits (as a poetic dramatist) of the representation of Syphax and Juba in *Cato*.

Robert M. Otten, one of the modern Addisonians, evaluates *Cato* very negatively: "Most modern critics think the play has too much declamation, moralizing, and silly love intriguing. Many find the hero an unattractive tragic figure: one finds him 'an intolerable prig' and another thinks he has too little to do. Most historians of drama regard *Cato* as a museum piece" (141). This might be true. But by liberating *Cato* from such an insipid traditional role, and repressed ideological meaning, we could, in Barthes's words, make a conventional "readerly" text with fixed and closed meaning like *Cato* a "writerly" text with open and multiple meaning.

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